

COMFORT FOR THE TEMPTED

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A SERMON

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*“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:
but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,
but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”
1 Corinthians 10:13*

THE children of God are all subject to temptation; some of them are tempted more than others, but I am persuaded that there is not one, except those who are too young to be conscious of evil, who will enter heaven without having endured some temptation. If any one could have escaped, surely it would have been “the firstborn among many brethren,” but you will remember how He was led of the Spirit, straight from the waters of His baptism, into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

And the apostle Paul informs us that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Truly, the Lord Jesus might say to us who are His followers, “If I, your Master and Lord, have been tempted, you must not expect to escape temptation, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.”

The fact that we are tempted ought to humble us, for it is sad evidence that there is sin still remaining in us. I am old enough to remember the times when we used to strike with a flint upon the steel in order to get a light in the morning, and I recollect that I always left off trying to produce a spark when I found that there was no tinder in the box.

I believe that the devil is no fool and that if there be a man who has no tinder in the box—that is, no corruption in his nature—depend upon it, Satan will not long continue to tempt him. He does not waste his time in such a useless exercise. The man who believes that he is perfect can never pray the Lord's prayer, he must offer one of his own making, for he will never be willing to say, “Lead us not into temptation.” But beloved, because the devil thinks it worth his while to tempt us, we may conclude that there is something in us that is temptable—that sin still dwells there, notwithstanding that the grace of God has renewed our hearts.

The fact that we are tempted ought also to remind us of our weakness. I referred just now to the model prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, which contains the sentence, “Lead us not into temptation.” The reason for presenting that petition must be, because we are so weak and frail. We ask that we may not be burdened, for our back is not strong, and we plead that we may not have sin put before us in any of its enticing forms, for oftentimes, the flesh borrows strength from the world and even from the devil, and these allied powers will be too much for us unless the omnipotence of God shall be exerted on our behalf to hold us up lest we fall.

Some children of God, whom I know of, are very greatly troubled, because they are tempted. They think they could bear trial if it were trial dissociated from sin, though I do not see how we can, as a general rule, separate trial from temptation, for every trial that comes to us has in it some kind of temptation or other, either to unbelief, or to murmuring, or to the use of wrong means to escape from the trial.

We are tempted by our mercies and we are tempted by our miseries, that is, tempted in the sense of being tried by them. But to the child of God, the most grievous thing is that sometimes he is tempted to

do or say things which he utterly hates. He has set before him, in a pleasant aspect, sins which are perfectly abhorrent to him. He cannot bear the very name of them. Yet Satan comes and holds before the child of God the unclean meats which he will never touch.

And I have known the devil to tempt the people of God by injecting into their mind blasphemous thoughts, hurling them into their ears as with a hurricane. Ay, even when you are in prayer, it may happen to you that thoughts the very opposite of devotional will come flocking into your brain. A little noise in the street will draw you off from communion with God, and almost before you are aware of it, your thoughts, like wild horses, will have gone galloping over hill and dale, and you hardly know how you shall ever catch them again.

Now, such temptations as these are dreadfully painful to a child of God. He cannot bear the poisoned breath of sin and when he finds that sin stands knocking at his door, shouting under his window, pestering him day and night, as it has occurred with some—I hope not with many—then he is sorely beset and is grievously troubled.

It may help such a person if I remind him that there is no sin in being tempted. The sin is that of the tempter, not of the tempted. If you resist the temptation, there is something praiseworthy about your action. There is nothing praiseworthy about the temptation, that is evil and only evil, but you did not tempt yourself, and he that tempted you must bear the blame of the temptation.

You are evidently not blameworthy for thoughts that grieve you. They may prove that there is sin still remaining in you, but there is no sin in your being tempted. The sin is in your yielding to the temptation, and blessed shall you be if you can stand up against it. If you can overcome it, if your spirit does not yield to it, you shall even be blessed through it. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.” There is a blessedness even in the temptation, and though for the present it seems not to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, it yields blessed fruit to those who are exercised thereby.

Moreover, there are worse things in this world than being tempted with painful temptations. It is much worse to be tempted with a pleasant temptation—to be gently sucked down into the destroyer’s mouth—to be carried along the smooth current, afterwards to be hurled over the cataract. This is dreadful, but to fight against temptation—this is good.

I say again that there are many worse things than to be tried with a temptation that arouses all the indignation of your spirit. An old divine used to say that he was more afraid of a sleeping devil than he was of a roaring one, and there is much truth in that observation. For when you are left quite alone and no temptation assails you, you are apt to get carnally secure and boastfully to say, “I shall never be moved.”

I think no man is in such imminent danger as the man who thinks that there is no danger likely to befall him, so that anything that keeps us on the watchtower, even though it is in itself evil, is, so far, overruled for good. The most dangerous part of the road to heaven is not the Valley of the Shadow of Death. We do not find that Christian went to sleep there when the hobgoblins were all about him and when he found it hard to feel the path and keep to it. But when he and Hopeful came to the Enchanted Ground, “whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy,” then were the pilgrims in great peril until Christian reminded his fellow traveler that they were warned by the shepherds not to sleep when they came to that treacherous part of the way.

I think, then, that to be tempted with painful temptations, those that goad the spirit almost to madness—bad as that trial is—grievous as it is to be borne—may be, spiritually, not the worst thing that can possibly happen to us. Of all evils that beset you, always choose that which is less than another, and as this is less than something else might be, do not be utterly driven to despair if it falls to your lot to be tempted as many before you have been.

This will suffice by way of preface to a little talk about temptation with a view of comforting any who are sorely tempted of Satan. I know that I am speaking to many such and I would repeat to them the words of my text, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is

faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Remember, dear tried friend, that you must not sit down in despair and say, “I am greatly tempted now and I am afraid that I shall be tempted worse and worse, until my feet shall slide, and I shall fall and utterly perish.” Do not say as David did when he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul,” but believe that the Lord, who permits you to be tempted, will deliver you in His own good time.

I. Here is your first comfort. THERE HAS BEEN A LIMIT IN ALL YOUR FORMER TRIALS. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.”

Temptation has sometimes laid hold of you, like a murderer takes a man by the throat, on a sudden. It has seized you—perhaps that is as correct a word as I can use—temptation has seized you, unawares, pinioned you and seemed to grip you fast. And yet, up till now, the temptations you have had to endure have only been such as are common to man.

First, *they are such as have been endured by your fellow Christians*. I know that you are tempted to think that you are a lone traveler on a road that nobody has ever traversed before you, but if you carefully examine the track, you can discover the footprints of some of the best of God’s servants who have passed along that wearisome way.

It is a very dark lane, you say—one that might truly be called, “Cut-throat Lane.” Ah! but you will find that apostles have been along that way, confessors have been that way, martyrs have been that way, and the best of God’s saints have been tempted just as you now are. “Oh, but!” says one, “I am tempted, as you said a little while ago, with blasphemous and horrible thoughts.”

So was Master John Bunyan. Read his *grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and see what he had to pass through. Many others have had a similar experience and among them are some of us who are alive to tell you that we know all about this special form of temptation, yet the Lord delivered us out of it.

“Oh, but!” says another tried soul, “I have been even tempted to self-destruction.” That also has not been an unusual temptation even to God’s dearest saints, and though He has preserved them and kept them alive, yet they have often felt like Job when he said, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.”

“Ah!” cries another, “I am tempted to the very worst sins, the foulest sins, I should not dare to even mention to you the abominations Satan tempts me to commit.” You need not tell me and I trust that you will be kept from them by the almighty power of God’s Holy Spirit, but I can assure you that even the saints in heaven, if they could speak to you at this moment, would tell you that some of them were hard beset—even some of the bravest of them who walked nearest to God were hard beset by temptations which they would not have told to their fellow men, so troubled were they by them.

Perhaps yet another friend says, “I have been actually tempted to self-righteousness, which is as great a temptation as can befall a man whose whole confidence is in Christ.” Well, so was Master John Knox, that grand preacher of justification by faith. When he lay dying, he was tempted to glory in his own bravery for Christ, but he fought against that evil thought and overcame it, and so may you.

You think that when a man is very patient, he is not tempted to impatience? Brother, the Spirit of God says, by the pen of the apostle James, “You have heard of the patience of Job.” I suggest to you this question—Have you not heard of the impatience of Job? You have heard, no doubt, of the strong faith of Peter. Have you never heard of Peter’s unbelief?

God’s people usually fail in the very point for which they are most famous, and the man who has the greatest renown for any work of the Spirit of God in him, so far as the Bible biographies are concerned, has usually been the man who has made a failure at just the place where he thought he was strongest. “I have been reading the life of a good man,” say you, “and I am not like him.” Shall I tell you why? Because the whole of his life was not written, but when the Holy Spirit writes a man’s life, He gives it all.

When biographers write the lives of good men, of course they do not put down their inward struggles and fears, unless the subject happens to be a man like Martin Luther, whose life seemed to be all an inward struggle, and who, while he was brave without, was often a trembler within. When they write my life, they will tell you that I had strong faith, but they will not tell you all about the other side of it.

And then you will, perhaps, get to thinking, “Oh, I cannot reach even to such a height as Mr. Spurgeon attained!” That all comes of your not knowing the inside of us, for if you knew the inside and the outside of the man who walks nearest to God—if he is a sincere, true-hearted man, he will tell you that the temptations you have to endure are just such temptations as he has had, and as he expects to have again and again, and that, as the apostle says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.”

Then, again, *no temptation has assailed you but such as fit for men to be tried with while they are in this state of trial*. This is not the time for the final victory, brother. This is the hour of battle and the weapons that are used against us are only such as have been employed against the armies of the faithful in all ages.

You and I never were tempted as were the angels who kept their first estate and overcame the temptation. I cannot tell you how the prince of darkness was tempted or how he went about tempting his fellow servants from their loyalty to the great King, but of this I am sure, you were never tried with a temptation suitable to an angel. Your temptation has only been such as is suitable to a man, and *such as other men like yourself have overcome*. Others have fought valiantly against similar temptations as yours and you must do the same, yea, and you shall do the same by the power of God’s Spirit resting upon you.

It is said, in the affairs of common life, that what man has done, man can do, and that is true with regard to the spiritual life. Temptations that have been grappled with by other men, can be grappled with by you if you seek the same source of strength and seek it in the same name as they did. The strength to overcome temptation comes from God alone and the conquering name is the name of Jesus Christ.

Therefore go forward in that strength and in that name against all your temptations. Up and at them, for they have been routed long before and you shall rout them again. Tremble not to go from fight to fight and from victory to victory, even as did the others who have gone before you and who have now entered into their rest.

*“Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.”*

If you ask them whence their victory came, they ascribe it to the resources which are as open to you as they were to them—even to the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit and the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. There hath no temptation happened to you but such as human beings can grapple with and overcome by the help of God.

Again, there has no temptation hitherto happened to you but such as is common to man in this sense—that *Christ has endured it*. That great Head of manhood, that representative Man, has suffered from the very temptation which is now pestering you. “In all their affliction”—that is, the affliction of His people in the wilderness, which is just the same as yours if you are in the wilderness—“in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.”

He was compassed with infirmity, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” To repeat the text I have already quoted, and which is so suitable here, He “was in all points tempted like as we are.” “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” He knows all about the case of each one of us and He knows how to deal with it, and how to bear us up and bear us through.

So you see, dear friends, there has no temptation happened to you but such as is common to man in the sense of having been endured by men like yourselves, having been overcome by men such as you are, and having been endured and vanquished by your blessed Representative, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Come, then, beloved, let all mystery with regard to your temptations be banished. Mystery puts an edge upon the sword of trial. Perhaps the hand that wrote upon the wall would not have frightened Belshazzar if he could have seen the body to which that hand belonged. There is no mystery about your trouble, after all. Though you did write it down as being bigger than any that ever happened to a human being before, that is not the truth—you are not an emperor in the realm of misery. You cannot truly say, “I am the man that has seen affliction above all others,” for your Lord endured far more than you have ever done, and many of His saints, who passed from the stake to the crown, must have suffered much more than you have been called to undergo thus far.

II. Now let us turn to the second comfort revealed in our text. That is, THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: *but God is faithful.*”

Oh, what a blessed word is this, “God is faithful!” Therefore, *He is true to His promise.* Even Balaam said, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” One of God’s promises is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” “God is faithful,” so He will fulfill that promise.

Here is one of the promises of Christ, and Christ is God, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” “God is faithful,” so that promise shall be fulfilled.

You have often heard this promise, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Do you believe it or will you make God a liar? If you do believe it, then banish from your mind all dark forebodings with this blessed little sentence, “God is faithful.”

Notice, next, that not only is God faithful, but *He is master of the situation, so that He can keep His promise.* Note what the text says. “Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear.” Then you could not have been tempted if God had not suffered it to happen to you. God is far mightier than Satan.

The devil could not touch Job except by divine permission, neither can he try and tempt you except as God allows him. He must have a permit from the King of Kings before he can tempt a single saint. Why, Satan is not allowed to keep the key of his own house, for the keys of death and of hell hang at the girdle of Christ, and without God’s permission, the dog of hell cannot even open his mouth to bark at a child of God, much less can he come and worry any of the sheep whom the Lord has called by His grace into His fold.

So, then, beloved, you have great cause for comfort from the fact that the temptation that tries you is still under the control of the faithful Creator, “who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.”

That is a second reason for comfort—roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel.

III. The third comfort lies in THE RESTRAINT WHICH GOD PUTS UPON TEMPTATION. He “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” The tide of trial shall rise to high-water mark and then God shall say, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

He “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” That may apply, sometimes, to *the period when the temptation comes.* I have carefully watched how God times the trials of His people. If such and such a trial had come to one of His children when he was young, I believe he could not have borne it. Or if he had lost some dear friend while he was himself sick, the double trouble would have crushed him.

But God sends our trials at the right time and if He puts an extra burden on in one way, He takes something off in another. “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the East wind.” It is a very simple

thing to say, but it is true—if the wind blows from the North, it does not at the same time blow from the South. And if one set of troubles comes to a Christian man, another set of troubles generally departs from him.

John Bradford, the famous martyr, was often subject to rheumatism and depression of spirit, in which I can greatly sympathize with him, but when he was laid by the heels in a foul damp dungeon and knew that he would never come out except to die, he wrote, “It is a singular thing that ever since I have been in this prison and have had other trials to bear, I have had no touch of my rheumatism or my depression of spirit.”

Was not that a very blessed thing? And you will usually find that it is so. You shall not be tempted above what you are able to bear, because God will permit the trial to come at a time when you are best able to stand up under it.

There is also great kindness on God’s part *in the continuance of a trial*. If some of our trials lasted much longer, they would be too heavy for us to bear. Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord said, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

And I have no doubt that, oftentimes, God makes quick work of His children’s trials because if they were continued longer, they would have not a good, but an evil effect upon us. If a child must be whipped, let not the punishment last as if he were a criminal who must be sentenced for a long period. Let him have his chastisement and have done with it.

So is it often in the discipline of God’s house, yet there are other trials which are protracted year after year because trial is an ingredient in their efficacy and they might not be blessed to us if they were shortened. In every case, there is infinite wisdom which makes our troubles to be just as long as they are and no longer.

So there is *in the number of the trials*. Blessed be God,—

*“If He ordains the number ten,
They ne’er can be eleven.”*

If He intends His servants to pass through the fire and not through the water, Satan himself cannot make them go through the water. God counts the drops of bitter tonic that He administers to His ailing saints and not one drop more shall they possibly have than He measures out to them. So, dear tried children of God, you shall not be tempted above what you are able so far as the number of your temptations and trials is concerned.

It is the same, also, *in the stress with which the temptation comes*. Have you ever seen a great tree in the full blast of a tremendous tempest? It sways to and fro, and seems scarcely able to recover itself from the powerful blows of the storm, yet the roots hold it. But now comes another tornado and it seems as if the tree must be torn up out of the earth, but the strain ceases just in time for the old oak to rock back into its place again.

Yet if there were a pound or two more force in that tremendous blast, the tree would be laid prone upon the grass. But God, in His people’s case, at any rate, just stops at the right point. You may be tried till you have not an ounce of strength left. Sometimes, the Lord tests His people till it seems as if one more breath from Him would assuredly cause them to sink. Then it is that He puts under them the everlasting arms and no further trial is laid upon them. This is a blessed thing, for all of you have troubles of one sort or another, and you who are the people of God may take this text and rely implicitly upon it, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.”

As for you who are not His people, I am very sorry for you. I am holding up these precious things, but they are not for you. God’s Word declares, “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” If you have not God to flee to, what will you do when the storms beat upon your barque? To whom or where can you flee? As for the Christian, he can sing,—

*“Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!*

*“Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
Oh receive my soul at last!*

But poor dear souls who love not Christ, where can you find comfort in your seasons of sorrow and trial? You who have lost wife and children—you who are pinched with poverty—you who are racked with sickness and yet have no Savior, what can you do? Poor houseless people in a snowstorm—what can they do without even a bush to shelter them? That is just your state and I grieve for you, and plead with you not to remain in such a pitiful condition a moment longer.

*“Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesu’s wounds;
This is the welcome Gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds.*

Oh, that your sense of need might drive you to accept Christ as your Savior this very hour! As for His believing people, there is this solid comfort for them, they shall never be tempted above what they are able.

IV. The next comfort we gather from our text relates to THE PROVISION WHICH THE LORD MAKES FOR THE TEMPTED, “God is faithful, who...will with the temptation also make a way to escape.”

The Greek has it, “who will with the temptation also make *the* way to escape,” for *there is a proper way to escape from a temptation*. There are twenty improper ways and woe to the man who makes use of any one of them. But there is only one proper way out of a trial and that is the straight way, the way that God has made for His people to travel.

God has made *through* all trials the way by which His servants may rightly come out of them. When the brave young Jews were tried by Nebuchadnezzar, there was one way by which they might have kept out of the burning fiery furnace. They had only to bow their knees before the great image when the flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery sounded.

That way of escape would never have answered, for it was not the right one. The way for them was to be thrown into the furnace and there to have the Son of God walking with them in the midst of the fire that could not hurt them. In like manner, whenever you are exposed to any trial, mind that you do not try to escape from it in any wrong way.

Notice especially that *the right way is always of God’s making*, therefore any of you who are now exposed to temptation or trial have not to make your own way of escape out of it. God, and God alone, has to make it for you, so do not attempt to make it for yourselves.

I knew a man who was in trouble because he was short of money, and the way he made for himself was to use somebody else’s money, with which he had been entrusted. That was not God’s way of escape for him, so he only plunged himself into a worse trial than he was in before.

I have known a man of business in great trouble and things were going wrong with him, so he speculated, and gambled, and ruined both his business and his personal character. That was not God’s way for him to escape from his troubles. Sometimes the best thing a man in trouble can do is to do nothing at all, but to leave all in the hands of God. “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”

When the Israelites came out of Egypt, God led them in a way at which men might well have caviled. There was nothing before them but the sea and behind them came Pharaoh in all his rage, crying, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them."

Now, then, what was God's way of escape for them? Right through the Red Sea, and on the other side they sang, when the Egyptians were drowned, "Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." It would have been a great pity if they had tried to escape by any way of their own, or had attempted to turn around and fight Pharaoh, that would not have done at all, but the Lord made for His people the very best way of escape that could possibly have been devised.

Notice, also, that *the Lord makes a way to escape "with the temptation."* He suffered the trial to come and at the same time He made a way of escape from it. God has planned it all, my brother, how you, His champion, shall go forth and fight valiantly in His strength, and how He will be your shield and your exceeding great reward.

He will lead you into the dangerous defile, but then He can see the way out of it as well as the way into it, and He will take you safely through. Did not the psalmist sing, "To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth forever"? He not only led them into the wilderness, but He led them through it, blessed be His holy name!

And if He has brought you into the wilderness of trouble and affliction, He made the way out of it at the same time that He made the trouble. "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all else that you need shall be added unto you. Keep clear of the sin of the temptation and you need not fear the sorrow of the temptation. If the trials do not drive you to your own devices, but drive you to your knees, they will, after all, be blessings to you.

That is the fourth comfort, that God has made a way of escape for His people out of their trials. "Well, then," says someone, "I shall escape from this trial." Wait a moment, my friend, and listen to the closing words of the text, with which I will conclude my discourse.

V. This is the last point of comfort, THE SUPPORT WHICH GOD SUPPLIES IN THE TRIAL, "that ye may be able to bear it."

God's way of escape from trial is not for His people to avoid it, so as not to pass through it, but such an escape as leads them through the trouble and out at the other end, not an escape *from* the Red Sea, but an escape *through* the Red Sea from a still greater trial. If you, beloved, are exposed to trial or temptation, you are to be made able to bear it. Now, pray, before you leave this building, that this last word, upon which I have not time to enlarge, may be fulfilled in your experience, "that ye may be able to bear it."

Suppose you are to be poor. Well, if God has so appointed it, you will be poor, therefore, pray that you may be able to bear it. With honest industry and stern integrity, struggle to attain to a better position, but if all your efforts fail, then say to the Lord, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Perhaps your dear child is dying or your wife is sickening. You dread the thought of losing them and you would willingly give your life, if you could, for them. Well, do all you can for their recovery, for life is precious, and any money spent to save it will be well-spent. But if health is not to be granted to them, pray that you may be able to bear even that heavy trial.

It is wonderful how God does help His people to bear troubles which they thought would crush them. I have seen poor feeble women, that I thought would die under their bereavement, become brave

and strong. I have seen poor feeble women, that I thought would die under their bereavement, become brave and strong. And men, who were faint-hearted in the prospect of trouble, have nevertheless blessed the Lord for it when the blow has actually fallen. And you may do the same.

Suppose you are to be sick. Well, that is a sore trial and I know that, personally, I would do anything I could to escape from the affliction that often besets me. But if it must not be, then I must change my note and pray that I may be able to bear it.

I had a letter from a man of God, this morning, which sustained me very much. He said, "My dear brother, I was sorry to hear that you were again in pain and depressed in spirit, and so forth, but as I remembered how God had blessed you in so many ways, I thought to myself, 'Perhaps Mr. Spurgeon would not have kept to preaching the doctrines of grace, and would not have been so able to comfort God's poor people, if he did not get these smart touches sometimes.' So," he said, "I congratulate you upon these trials."

And I accepted the congratulation. Will not you do the same, my afflicted brother or sister? Pray, "Lord, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but if it must not, then here comes that other form of comfort, "that ye may be able to bear it."

And remember, dear friends, while I tell you to make this passage into a prayer, it is really a promise, and there is no prayer like a promise that is turned, as it were, roundabout, and cut prayer-wise. God Himself has said, by His inspired apostle, that He "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Up with the banners, then! Forward, whatever obstructs the way! Let us sing, with good old John Ryland,—

*"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where He goes;
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose."*

The immortal life within us can never be destroyed. The divine nature, which God the Holy Ghost, has implanted, shall never be trodden under foot. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me."

But oh, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry am I, from the bottom of my soul, for you who know not the Lord, for this comfort is not for you! Seek Him, I pray you. Seek Him as your Savior. Look to Him and trust in Him, and then all the blessings of the everlasting covenant shall be yours, for the Father has given Him to be a Leader and Commander unto the people, and they that look to Him, and follow Him, shall live forever and ever.

God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—675, 750, 745

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